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PUNJAB FARMER UNIONS CALL ALL-PARTY MEET MINUS BJP

Angry farmers are in no mood to allow parties to visit villages for campaigning in the run-up to the upcoming Assembly polls

MEETING CALLED FOLLOWING AKALI REQUEST

After a lengthy meeting at Singhu on the Delhi-Haryana border on Wednesday, 32 Punjab farmer unions decided to call a meeting of the representatives of all political parties fighting Punjab elections, minus the BJP, on September 10 (Friday) at Chandigarh. The decision was taken after the Shiromani Akali Dal sought such a meeting to explain its position

'CAMPAIGNING WILL WEAKEN AGITATION'

■ "Doing poll campaign now is too early, plus it will dent the farmers' movement against the three Central laws," said Harinder Singh Lakhwal, general secretary, BKU (Lakhwal), Punjab
■ Farm leaders had earlier said that no political party, especially the BJP, was welcome till the three farm laws were repealed | P10

2022

PUNJAB ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS ARE DUE TO BE HELD EARLY NEXT YEAR

NSA Ajit Doval holds talks with visiting heads of CIA and MI-6 as well

India, Russia share Af terror overflow worry

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

WITH terror inextricably linked to the DNA of the government unveiled by the Taliban in Afghanistan, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval on Wednesday held separate meetings with his Russian counterpart Nikolai Patrushev and CIA chief Williams Burns. During the Doval-Patrushev meeting, both sides agreed to coordinate their approaches in multilateral formats on the developments in Afghanistan.



Nikolai Patrushev

Call to curb terror

Both Russia and India agreed on the need for Taliban to adhere to promises, curb global terror groups operating out of Afghanistan and their consequent threat to Central Asia and India, and smuggling

on India and China was discussed at length. The role of drug cartels was also discussed with Doval and his counterpart assuring each other of cooperation to meet current and future threats and measures to assist Afghanistan.

Doval is understood to have underlined Pakistan deep state's symbiotic links with terror groups in Afghanistan, such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed. He also expressed concern over security of minorities like Afghan Hindus and Sikhs who could not be evacuated.

Patrushev later met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The two sides reaffirmed their intention to strengthen coordination in the field of enhancing regional stability, including on the Afghan direction," a Russian Embassy statement said. The India-Russia meeting assumes significance as weeks ago, Russia and China had abstained from voting on a joint India-France-US-UK resolution on Afghanistan at the UN Security Council.

Earlier in the day, New Delhi shared its Afghan concerns with visiting security heads of Britain and the US, MI-6 chief Richard Moore and CIA chief William Burns, respectively.

Taliban 2.0's PM among 7 UN-listed terrorists in govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

THE Taliban's all-male government comprising its hardline leaders — many of them UN designated terrorists — has received a resounding thumbs-down from the international community. While the US raised concern about the terror affiliations and track records of the new ministers, the EU said the outfit reneged on its promise to make the government inclusive. Germany said it's "not optimistic" about Taliban. But, China welcomed the Taliban government and announced \$31 million aid.

On the UN Security Council's terrorism blacklist are PM Mullah Mohammad Hasan Akhund and his deputies Abdul Ghani Baradar and Abdul Salam Hanafi. The others include economy minister Qari Din Hanif, deputy interior minister Maulvi Noor Jalal, water & energy minister Abdul Latif Mansoor and telecom minister Najibullah Haqqani. Interior minister Sirajuddin Haqqani is wanted by the FBI.

The 33-member interim Cabinet includes those released from the Guantanamo Bay prison by the Obama administration in 2014 in exchange for US Army deserter Bowe Bergdahl. These are Mullah Mohammad Fazil (deputy defence minister), Khairullah Khairkhwah (information & culture), Noorullah Noori (borders and tribal affairs) and Abdul Haq Wasiq (Director of Intelligence). Another US prisoner, Mohammad Nabi Omari, was appointed as governor of eastern Khost Province recently.

Meanwhile, Taliban's new education minister Noorullah Munir said higher education is useless. "No PhD or master's degree is valuable today. You see that the Taliban leaders have no PhD, MA or even a high school degree, but they are the greatest of all," he said, unwittingly explaining the militia's contempt for education. P12

Amid Covid wave, K'taka attracts ₹62K cr FDI in Q1

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

AMID the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic second wave, Karnataka managed to attract ₹62,085 crore in Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) during the first quarter (April-June) of this fiscal.

This has come as a shot in the arm for the Basavaraj Bommal-led government, which is preparing to host the Global Investors' Meet next February. Briefing the media here on

Wednesday, Large and Medium Scale Industries Minister Murugesu Nirani said Karnataka had attracted ₹30,746 crore FDI in 2019-20 and stood third in the country. "In 2020-21, Karnataka retained the third spot by attracting FDI of Rs 56,884 crore," he added.

He said that the State Government has implemented several reforms to ensure ease of doing business such as affidavit-based clearance, central inspection system, and land and labour laws. P4

He led India from milk deficiency to milk proficiency



Amul
Tribute to Dr. Kurien on his 9th death anniversary

1 dead, 4 missing as ferry capsizes in Assam

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @ Guwahati

ABOUT four people on board a crowded ferry were reported missing, while one body was found, as the boat sank in the flooded Brahmaputra in Assam shortly after a mid-stream collision with another tub on Wednesday. The accident occurred barely 100 metres from Neamatighat in Upper Assam's Jorhat district around 3.30 pm.

While officials earlier said around 35 were missing, Assam State Disaster Management Authority Chief Executive Officer G D Tripathi scaled the figure down to four past midnight, as contact had been established with most of the missing people. They swam ashore or were successfully rescued by locals.

The tragedy struck passengers of 'Maa Kamala', which had set sail for Kamalabari in river island Majuli from Neamatighat. It capsized moments after colliding with



A man struggles to clamber on to the ill-fated ferry while a few other passengers try to maintain balance moments before it fully sank, in Jorhat, Assam, on Wednesday | P11



MAJULI'S LIFELINE

Mechanised boats are the lifeline of people of Majuli. Official sources said there were 27 two-wheelers as well on the ill-fated ferry. They said such ferries carry around 70-80 people along with vehicles, mostly two-wheelers

search and rescue operations," the SP added. While officials said such ferries carry around 70-80 people, locals claimed there were 100-120 passengers on board.

Ferries on the Brahmaputra operate under the Inland Water Transport Department. Tickets are not issued.

FLOATING GOLD

Spurt in illegal ambergris sale stumps police

MG CHETAN @ Bengaluru

IN June, the KG Halli police, who were chasing a drug network, came across a strange object when they caught two persons on the suspicion of selling drugs. The duo turned out to be middlemen and even they were not sure what exactly they were carrying, but only knew that it was precious. The police took almost a day to conclude that it was ambergris a.k.a. floating gold.

Ever since the first such case was cracked in Karnataka, a few more similar cases came to light. On Wednesday, the Chikkajala police arrested four people who were allegedly trying to sell ambergris and have 11 kg of the product valued at ₹11 crore. The police had received a tip-off that some people were trying to sell ambergris near Ganganagar Circle on VIT Road.

"One of the accused hails from Tamil Nadu, while three others are residents of Bengaluru. We are questioning them to ascertain where they got the product from," police said. In all the cases, it is found that the accused smuggled ambergris from coastal areas and were trying to make a fortune by selling it, as its price is estimated to be around ₹1 crore per kg. P7

2 new sub-lineages of Delta variant in B'luru

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

WHILE the state war room's daily bulletin on Covid-19 figures presents a reassuring picture, two sub-lineages of the SARS-CoV-2 Delta variant — the AY4 and AY12 — have been detected in samples from Bengaluru, raising concerns among experts about a changing virus and the possibility of it developing the capability to evade antibodies generated through vaccination.

Strand Life Sciences, which did the sequencing here, was given a mandate by the Covid Task Force in Karnataka to start genome sequencing to help detect trends in mutations in the state. The sequencing revealed 30 per cent mutation in the Delta AY4 variant while it was just 3 per cent in AY12.

But a senior doctor, privy to the genome sequencing, explained to The New Indian Express, "How-

ever little the mutation, we cannot be complacent as no studies have been conducted as to what effects these can have. A layman would think this is very less mutation than the Delta variant, so it is safe. But virologists globally say that's not true, as it is changing its form. The mutation, even if little, may help the virus acquire some other mutation elsewhere. We still don't know, but it is definitely changing and it needs closer examination." The analysis said the virus was changing and Delta's sub-lineages are spread across Bengaluru Urban and are also picking up new mutations.

According to a recent bulletin of Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG), the AY12 sub-lineage was the one driving the Covid-19 surge in Israel, despite 60 per cent of that country's population covered by vaccination. P9

NATIONWIDE	SEPT 07	SEPT 08
Fresh cases	31,222	37,875
Recoveries	42,942	39,114
Deaths	290	369

KARNATAKA	SEPT 07	SEPT 08
Fresh cases	851	1,102
Recoveries	790	1,458
Deaths	15	17

EXPRESS READ

Prison fire kills 41 inmates in Indonesia

Jakarta: A massive fire raged through the overcrowded Tangerang prison on the outskirts of Indonesia's capital early on Wednesday, killing at least 41 inmates, two of them foreigners serving drug sentences. Around 80 prisoners were injured in the inferno. P12

Will buy 350 aircraft over 2 decades: IAF

New Delhi: The Indian Air Force is looking at procuring around 350 aircraft from the domestic aerospace industry in the next two decades that include the 83 Light Combat Aircraft Tejas. Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria said on Wednesday.

BATTLE FOR 5 STATES

BJP readies for polls, Pradhan to manage UP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE ruling BJP on Wednesday cranked up its poll machine by assigning senior ministers the task of managing five states that are slated for Assembly elections early next year. Union ministers Dharmaendra Pradhan, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Pralhad Joshi and Bhupender Yadav will oversee preparations in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Manipur, respectively.

Union minister Anurag Thakur will assist Pradhan in UP. Eight other senior leaders will be part of the team managing UP. They include Arjun Ram Meghwal, Shobha Karandlaje, Saroj Pandey, Capt Abhimanyu, Annapurna Devi and Vivek Thakur. The BJP has created six zones for UP (Kashi, Braj, western UP, Avadh, Kanyasulk and Gorakhpur), which will be looked after by senior functionaries of the party.

Shekhawat will be the election in-charge for Punjab. He will be assisted by Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri and Meenakshi Lekhi.

Pralhad Joshi has been appointed election in-charge for Uttarakhand. Bhupender Yadav will be the election in-charge for Manipur, while former Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnis will manage Goa. Barring Punjab, the BJP is in power in all four poll-bound states.

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